

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

*A report from the Commissioner of Public Buildings.*

DECEMBER 8, 1836.

Read, and laid upon the table.

WASHINGTON, December 6, 1836.

*To the House of Representatives of the United States :*

I transmit to Congress a report from the Commissioner of Public Buildings, showing the progress made in the construction of the public buildings which, by the act of the 4th of July last, the President was authorized to cause to be erected.

ANDREW JACKSON.

OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS,  
Washington, December 3, 1836.

SIR : I have the honor to report, that your order, dated the 6th of June last, "designating the Commissioner of Public Buildings to superintend generally the detailed modifications and plans of the Treasury building and Patent Office, the advertising and forming of contracts, and the whole disbursements thereon," were duly attended to ; and that arrangements were immediately made for the erection of fire-proof buildings, conformable to the plans adopted by you, and on the sites selected.

Proposals were invited, by public advertisements, for such materials as were necessary to commence the work ; and contracts entered into on terms, it was believed, advantageous to Government.

Considering the delay occasioned by advertising, and the difficulty in procuring materials and workmen at the commencement of the work, the progress has been as great as could have been expected.

The amount expended on the Treasury building, in payments to work-

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men, preparing work-shops, collecting materials, &c., up to this date, is \$43,837 48; and there has been expended on the Patent Office building, for like purposes, up to this date, the sum of \$22,047 67.

I beg leave to refer to the accompanying report of the architect, for an exposition of the state of the work, &c.

I am, with high respect,

Your obedient servant,

W. NOLAND.

To the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

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WASHINGTON CITY, *December 1, 1836.*

SIR: In presenting my report on the progress of the public buildings, I would respectfully draw your attention to a few prefatory remarks.

It will be borne in mind, that active operations with respect to these works did not commence until the best part of the working season had elapsed, in consequence of the late period when the appropriations for the buildings were made. It was the month of August before the foundations of the Treasury buildings were begun; and such was the difficulty of procuring masons, that after every effort was made to obtain them, their number, for the greater part of the season, barely exceeded half the force which we could have employed to advantage: under every difficulty, however, the superintendents have faithfully performed their duty; and the progress made evidences the industry and zeal of the workmen employed. A heavy body of masonry has been laid, both in the Treasury and Patent Office buildings; and considerable quantities of stone have been prepared, some of which, granite principally, is already set in the walls. From the present advanced state of these works, and the quantity of cut stone, which is now, and will have been prepared, during the coming winter and spring; we are warranted in the belief that we shall, unless trammelled by untoward circumstances, such as a disappointment in our supply of stone, an inclement season, or a deficiency in the requisite force, be able to roof them in before the succeeding winter. In the latter event, we might anticipate the completion of the interior of the same the year following. Estimates calculated to reach this desirable state of the works will in proper time be submitted to you, to lay before the honorable Committee of Public Buildings.

To the estimates for the Treasury block, I shall add an estimate for erecting the south buildings, constituting part of the plan adopted by the President, and omitted in the execution of the centre, in consequence of its not being immediately required for the Treasury accommodation. The expediency of progressing in this building simultaneously with the other, will be obvious, when we take into consideration the necessity of providing for the future accommodation of the State Department; it will otherwise be subject to much inconvenience, when the necessary alterations and changes are made in the building now occupied by this department, to adapt it to the main edifice; I would, therefore, respectfully recommend that the south building be also put under construction.

With respect to the Patent Office structure, I would remark, that in consequence of the requisition of Congress that it should be constructed

of cut stone, and that the appropriation being found inadequate to meet this expense upon the extent of the plan adopted, I was compelled, in abiding by the original dimensions, to make such changes, and delay such operations, in the expensive details of the plan, as would enable me to keep within the sum appropriated; should Congress not deem it expedient to make additional appropriations to meet the increased cost of the building, growing out of the substitution of *cut stone* for *bricks*, and of a fire-proof edifice for a combustible one, inasmuch as upon the latter the original estimates were founded, and the appropriations based.

The building, as far as it has progressed, is constructed in the most substantial manner, adapted to the fire-proof character which it is intended to assume. Both fronts are faced with split granite, laid in regular courses with dressed joints. Estimates will be submitted to show what additional sum would be necessary to carry out and complete the plan; also, in the event of abandoning the use of cut stone, what amount will be required to give the building a fire-proof character, and to erect it upon the cheapest plan in brick. The immense proportions of the portico of this building, being exactly those of the Parthenon of Athens, involve a large portion of its total expense; what this is computed at, I shall state in the comparative estimates.

#### THE TREASURY BUILDING.

The foundations of the entire extent of this building, 460 feet in length, including the western projections, are laid.

The front range of rooms, brought up to the springing line of the groin arches, several of which are turned and laid in hydraulic cement, and the cut granite facing on the west front, made up as high as the window seats. A large quantity of materials, granite, free stone, cut and in the rough, brick, lime and mortar, is collected on the spot; and roomy shops are provided for the workmen to cut and dress the stone in during the winter, so that no time may be lost in progressing with the buildings in due season.

#### THE PATENT OFFICE BUILDING.

The foundations of the entire extent of this building, 270 feet in length by 69 feet in width, have been laid; and the granite facing, to the basement story, built up on both fronts—that on the north, to the springing line of the arches—that on the south, at the east end, the same height. Part of the first tier of groin arches have been turned on the east wing, north side. As in the case of the Treasury building, there is a considerable quantity of materials, of granite, of foundation stone, brick, lime, sand and mortar, collected on the ground ready for spring operations; while shops have also been erected for housing the workmen and cutting the stone during the winter months. This building was commenced late in July, and has steadily progressed ever since. The foundation walls have necessarily been very heavy in some places, from the pitching and inconsistent nature of the ground, requiring a great depth of digging, which has considerably increased the cost.

The split granite has been selected for facing the basement story; but it will not be practicable to use either freestone, or this material even, in

its rough state, for the superstructure, unless an additional appropriation be made. It will be remembered that the bill making an appropriation for constructing this building, as it came from the Senate, contemplated a brick and wood structure; these materials, by a proviso of the House, were changed for cut-stone facing to the exterior walls, and also fire-proof within; which changes, consequently, add greatly to the expense, without any addition being made to the original sum appropriated to meet this change.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

**ROBERT MILLS,**

*Architect of the public buildings.*

**WM. NOLAND, Esq.,**

*Commissioner of Public Buildings.*